

108TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2488

To provide for the protection of the tropical forests of the Karst Region of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the aquifers and watersheds of this region that constitute a principal water source for much of Puerto Rico, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 17, 2003

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ (for himself, Mr. DUNCAN, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. GRIJALVA, and Ms. BORDALLO) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Resources

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## A BILL

To provide for the protection of the tropical forests of the Karst Region of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the aquifers and watersheds of this region that constitute a principal water source for much of Puerto Rico, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### 3   **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Puerto Rico Karst  
5   Conservation Act of 2003”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS, PURPOSES, AND DEFINITIONS.**

2 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

3 (1) The Karst Region of the Commonwealth of  
4 Puerto Rico contains some of the largest areas of  
5 tropical forests in Puerto Rico with a higher density  
6 of tree species than any other area on the island.

7 (2) The Karst Region has unique geological for-  
8 mations that are critical to the maintenance of  
9 aquifers and watersheds that constitute a principal  
10 water supply for much of Puerto Rico.

11 (3) The Karst Region is threatened by develop-  
12 ment that, if unchecked, could permanently damage  
13 aquifers supplying fresh water and cause irreparable  
14 damage to natural and environmental assets that are  
15 unique to the United States and Puerto Rico.

16 (4) Puerto Rico is one of the most densely pop-  
17 ulated areas of the United States, which makes the  
18 protection of the Karst Region an imperative for the  
19 maintenance of the public health and welfare of the  
20 citizens of Puerto Rico.

21 (5) The Karst Region possesses extraordinary  
22 ecological diversity, including the habitats of several  
23 endangered and threatened species and tropical mi-  
24 grants, and is, therefore, an area of critical value to  
25 research in tropical forest management.

(6) Coordinated efforts at land protection by the Federal Government and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico will be necessary to conserve the environmentally critical Karst Region.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to authorize and support conservation efforts to acquire, manage, and protect the tropical forest areas of the Karst Region of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, with particular emphasis on protecting water quality and the aquifers which are vital to the health and well being of the citizens of Puerto Rico; and

(2) to promote cooperation among the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Federal Agencies, corporations, organizations, and individuals in such conservation efforts.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) COMMONWEALTH.—The term “Commonwealth” means the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

(2) KARST REGION.—The term “Karst Region” means those areas in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico generally depicted on the map entitled “Karst Region Conservation Area” and dated March, 2001. The map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the Office of the Secretary, Puerto Rico

1 Department of Natural and Environmental Re-  
2 sources, and the Office of the Chief of the Forest  
3 Service.

4 (3) LAND.—The term “land” includes lands,  
5 waters, and interests in lands and waters.

6 (4) FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM.—The term  
7 “Forest Legacy Program” means the program es-  
8 tablished pursuant to section 7 of the Cooperative  
9 Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2103e).

10 (5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
11 the Secretary of Agriculture.

12 **SEC. 3. CONSERVATION OF KARST REGION, COMMON-**  
13 **WEALTH OF PUERTO RICO.**

14 (a) FEDERAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE.—The  
15 Secretary may—

16 (1) make grants to, and enter into contracts  
17 and cooperative agreements with, the Common-  
18 wealth, other Federal agencies, organizations, cor-  
19 porations, and individuals for the purposes of fur-  
20 thering the acquisition, management, and protection  
21 of land in and adjacent to the Karst Region and im-  
22 plementing related natural resources conservation  
23 strategies; and

24 (2) utilize all authorities available to the Sec-  
25 retary, including the Forest and Rangeland Renew-

1        able Resources Research Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C.  
2        1641 et. seq.), section 1472 of the National Agricul-  
3        tural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act  
4        of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3318), and section 12 of the Ste-  
5        venson–Wylder Technology Innovation Act of 1980  
6        (15 U.S.C. 3710a), for such purposes.

7        (b) FUNDING SOURCES.—The activities authorized  
8        by this section may be carried out using amounts in the  
9        Puerto Rico Karst Conservation Fund, the fund estab-  
10       lished by section 4(b) of the Forest and Rangeland Renew-  
11       able Resources Research Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 1643(b)),  
12       funds appropriated from the Land and Water Conserva-  
13       tion Fund, funds appropriated for the Forest Legacy Pro-  
14       gram, and any other funds made available for this section.

15       (c) MANAGEMENT OF ACQUIRED LANDS.—

16            (1) MANAGEMENT PURPOSE.—Land acquired  
17        under the authority of this section or using funds  
18        made available under this section shall be managed  
19        in a manner to protect and conserve the water qual-  
20        ity and aquifers and the geological, ecological, fish  
21        and wildlife, and other natural values of the Karst  
22        Region. Any Federal land within the Karst Region  
23        acquired pursuant to this section or the Forest Leg-  
24        acy Program shall be managed by the Secretary pur-  
25        suant to the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Re-

1 sources Research Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 1641 et.  
2 seq.).

3 (2) UNITED STATES INTEREST.—In deeds,  
4 grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements imple-  
5 menting this section and the Forest Legacy Program  
6 in Puerto Rico, the Secretary may require that title  
7 to land acquired by the Commonwealth or other co-  
8 operating entity under the authority of this section  
9 or using funds made available under this section will  
10 vest, at the discretion of the Secretary, in the United  
11 States if the land is sold or conveyed whole or part,  
12 or is not managed in conformity with paragraph (1).

13 (d) WILLING SELLERS.—Any land acquisition by the  
14 Secretary within the Karst Region under the authority of  
15 this section and using funds made available under this sec-  
16 tion shall be on a willing seller basis.

17 (e) RELATION TO OTHER LAND AUTHORITIES.—  
18 Nothing in this Act shall diminish any other authority that  
19 the Secretary may have to acquire, manage, and protect  
20 lands and natural resources in the Commonwealth.

21 (f) RELATION TO COMMONWEALTH WATER LAWS.—  
22 Nothing in this section shall constitute an express or im-  
23 plied claim or denial on the part of the Federal Govern-  
24 ment as to exemption from Commonwealth water laws.

1 **SEC. 4. PUERTO RICO KARST CONSERVATION FUND.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is hereby established  
3 on the books of the Treasury an interest bearing account  
4 to be known as the “Puerto Rico Karst Conservation  
5 Fund”.

6 (b) CREDITS TO FUNDS.—There shall be credited to  
7 the Fund the following:

8 (1) Amounts appropriated to the Fund.

9 (2) All moneys donated to the Fund.

10 (3) All moneys generated from the Caribbean  
11 National Forest which would otherwise be deposited  
12 as miscellaneous receipts in the Treasury of the  
13 United States, but not including those moneys au-  
14 thorized by law for payments to the Commonwealth  
15 of Puerto Rico or authorized by law for retention by  
16 the Forest Service for any purpose.

17 (4) All moneys received by the Administrator of  
18 General Services from the disposal of surplus real  
19 property in Puerto Rico pursuant to title 40, United  
20 States Code, or any other provision of law.

21 (5) Interest derived from amounts in the Fund  
22 and any other moneys donated for deposit in the  
23 Fund.

24 (c) USE OF FUND.—Amounts in the Fund shall be  
25 available to the Secretary until expended, without further  
26 appropriation, to carry out section 3.

1 (d) DONATIONS.—

2 (1) ACCEPTANCE.—The Secretary may accept  
 3 donations, including land and money, made by pub-  
 4 lic and private agencies, corporations, organizations,  
 5 and individuals in furtherance of the purposes of  
 6 this Act. The Secretary may accept such donations  
 7 even though the donor is regulated by, conducts  
 8 business with, or seeks to conduct business with, the  
 9 Department of Agriculture or any other department  
 10 or agency of the United States.

11 (2) TREATMENT OF DONATIONS.—Public Law  
 12 95–442 (7 U.S.C. 2269) shall apply to donations ac-  
 13 cepted by the Secretary under this subsection.

14 **SEC. 5. RELATION TO FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM.**

15 (a) INCLUSION OF KARST REGION.—All lands in the  
 16 Karst Region shall be eligible for inclusion in the Forest  
 17 Legacy Program.

18 (b) COST SHARING.—The Secretary may credit dona-  
 19 tions made under section 4(d) to satisfy any cost sharing  
 20 requirements of the Forest Legacy Program.

21 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

22 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Puerto  
 23 Rico Karst Conservation Fund such sums as may be nec-  
 24 essary to carry out this Act.

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